



Brussels, 24 September 2021

## Speech for the 35th anniversary of the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA)

Jacques Vandenschrik, FEBA President

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

35 years ago, two gentlemen, a French citizen Mr Bernard Dandrel and a Belgian citizen Mr André Hubert decided that as there were two Food Banks, one in Paris – the first one – and one in Brussels – the second one. They realised the need for a single and organised body that would represent Food Banks at a European level. The **Fédération Européenne des Banques Alimentaires – European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA)** was **launched on 23 September 1986**.

Today we have the immense privilege, and may I say the wonderful fortune, to have as our guest of honour our founding president, Monsieur Bernard Dandrel accompanied by his daughter Mrs Véronique Dandrel.

I would ask your permission to address Mr Dandrel in French for a few words and will reverse back to English soon thereafter.

Cher Monsieur Dandrel, cher Bernard,

Tout d'abord, laissez-moi vous dire combien nous sommes honorés mais aussi tout simplement heureux de vous avoir parmi nous ce soir et de célébrer avec vous et UN jour de retard, le 35ième anniversaire de notre belle organisation. Charles Darwin pensait que les espèces qui survivent ne sont pas les espèces les plus fortes, ni les plus intelligentes, mais celles qui s'adaptent le mieux au changement.



Je pense que vous pouvez regarder l'œuvre que vous avez créée avec sérénité. Notre organisation est née sous vos auspices, a grandi sous votre guidance et est maintenant partie intégrante et intégrée du concert international alimentaire. Cette évolution a été rendue possible par l'avènement de l'économie circulaire dont l'action des banques alimentaires fut un précurseur. Vous avez répondu à l'appel de Sœur Cécile Bigot, avec votre intelligence, votre sagesse mais surtout avec votre cœur. Votre famille aujourd'hui vous remercie et vous rend un hommage tellement mérité. Vous avez réellement aidé l'homme à se restaurer.

Dear friends,

after these few words addressed to our founding President, I would like to welcome you all and ask you to raise at the call of your country. Today we have to register the apologies of Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, and Switzerland could unfortunately not reach Brussels because of the sanitary regulations or previous commitments. We have the pleasure to register the presence of Albania, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Romania, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

Our friends from The Global FoodBanking Network, all the way from Chicago are joining us. Mrs Lisa Moon and Mr Chris Rebstock, we are so glad to have you with us today.

We also have the real pleasure to welcome our past Secretary General Mr Patrick Alix and his wife Nicole. It is wonderful to have you with us tonight.

I would be very unfair if I did not mention the presence but also the extraordinary dedication of our Secretary General and her staff. Please welcome Angela Frigo, Charlotte Daneau (Communication Manager), Valentina D'Arrigo (Partnerships and Capacity Building Manager), Anna Oggioni (Assistant to the Secretary General), Filippo Cantù Rajnoldi (Partnerships and Capacity Building Manager), and Anna Fiederitz (EU Policy Trainee).



We also have the privilege of the presence of some spouses or partners. We know how much your support is necessary to your partner to assume his/her role in the food banking movement. We are sincerely very grateful to you.

We live in a very rapidly changing world and there is no doubt that the principal and most rapid change which ordains the evolution is due to human activity.

So, the world economic continued growth since the beginning of the industrial era is conditioned by a continued supply of resources and notably of energy.

The need in additional energy to sustain this expansion is estimated at 2% per year which equates to a doubling of the required energy every 35 years. If the growth carries on at this rate, it is estimated that our needs in energy in 500 years will be 10,000 times higher than today. That equates to the total solar energy received on earth. The conclusion, for the physicist, is evident, durable growth does not exist!

The same reasoning can apply to the world population, to the feeding resources of the planet. We need a paradigm change if we do not want to witness more and more growth in hungry people. There is no simple answer to such global and anguishing problem, and I certainly would not venture in any recommendation, but I believe that worldwide, Food Bankers are ideally positioned to involve themselves in the awareness campaigns that happen or will happen everywhere.

FEBA members assists in mitigating the unwanted effects of growth in population and decrease in food availability. These two opposing parameters are even more frightening in developing countries, and it is fitting to salute the remarkable work done by GFN in these parts of the world. To a lesser degree, Feeding America is facing the same challenges and deserves our cordial salute as well. Most international organisations are aware of the problem and are setting up important international conferences about the inadequacies of the present food system. New ideas are widespread: insects-based food processing, vertical farming and so



many more. However, they fail to address the other side of the coin: the growing population and how to adequate population and resources.

Food Banks are now better equipped to adapt their operations to the local prevailing conditions. Professionalism is a key ingredient for success, and this is well integrated in most Food Banks today. I do not want to quote many numbers today; it suffices to say that our Food Bank members in Europe are collectively delivering 1,636 Kg of food every minute. This is a significant increase compared to 2019 and such increase is mainly due to the pandemic. In these very trying times, Food Banks have responded with additional efforts, dedication, and a very determined sense of purpose. May you all be praised for your remarkable achievements.

For one moment, allow me to be personal. This is the last FEBA anniversary that I will preside as next year, I will be handing over the responsibilities of Board member and President of this beautiful organisation. I would like to thank you all for the opportunity and the honour to preside the European Food Banks Federation and I invite to raise your glass and to toast the FEBA and its next 35 years.